Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist was particularly concerned with the way thinking develops in children from birth till they become young adults. To understand the nature of this development, Piaget carefully observed the behaviour of his own three kids. He used to present problems to them, observe responses slightly after the situations and again observe their responses. Piaget called this method of exploring development clinical interview. Piaget believed that humans also adapt to their physical and social environments in which they live. The process of adaptation begins since birth. Piaget saw this adaptation in terms of two basic processes: **Assimilation and Accommodation**.

Assimilation. It refers to the process by which new objects and events are grasped or incorporated within the scope of existing schemes or structures.

Accommodation. It is the process through which the existing schemes or structure is modified to meet the resistance to straightforward grasping or assimilation of a new object or event.

According to Piaget there are 4 basic elements in development:

1. Maturation.
2. Experience.
3. Social transmission (learning through language, schooling or teaching by parents)
4. Equilibrium.

The important concept of Piaget's theory of cognitive development is the fixed progression from one stage to another. Piaget viewed cognitive growth as a progressive change. Growth varies from person to person. Piaget assumed that it follows a fixed sequence.

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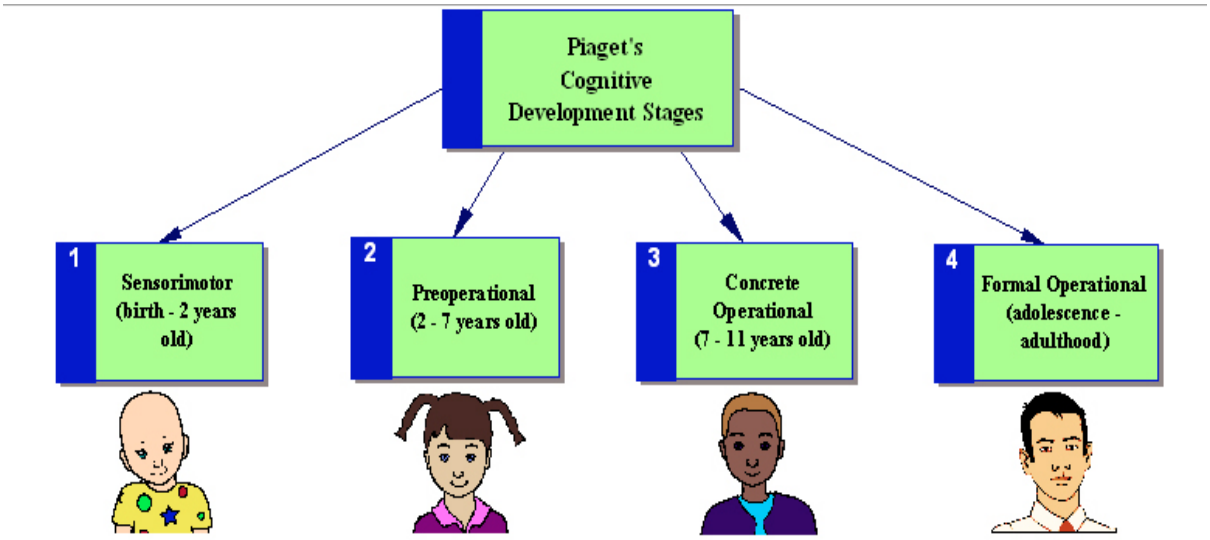

Stages of Cognitive Development

1. **Sensory-motor Stage. (Birth to 2 years)**

Major Characteristics and Developmental Changes:

- The infant learns about the world through their senses and through their actions (moving around and exploring its environment).
- During the sensorimotor stage a range of cognitive abilities develop. These include: **object permanence**; self-recognition; deferred imitation; and representational play.
- They relate to the emergence of the general symbolic function, which is the capacity to represent the world mentally
- At about 8 months the infant will understand the permanence of objects and that they will still exist even if they can't see them and the infant will search for them when they disappear.

Sub-Stages

1. Reflex acts (1 month)
2. Primary circular reactions (1-4 months)
3. Secondary circular reactions (4-8 months)
4. Co-ordinating secondary schemes (8-12 months)
5. Tertiary circular reactions (12-18 months)
6. Symbolic thought (18-24 months)

2. Pre- Operational Stage (2-7years)

- Toddlers and young children acquire the ability to internally represent the world through language and mental imagery.
- During this stage, young children can think about things symbolically. This is the ability to make one thing, such as a word or an object, stand for something other than itself.
- A child's thinking is dominated by how the world looks, not how the world is. It is not yet capable of logical (problem solving) type of thought.
- Infants at this stage also demonstrate animism. This is the tendency for the child to think that non-living objects (such as toys) have life and feelings like a person.

Following are the accomplishments of Pre-Operational Stage:

a. Semantic function. During this stage the child develops the ability to think using symbols and signs.
b. Symbols represent something or someone else; for example, a doll may symbolize a baby, child or an adult.
c. Egocentrism. This stage is characterized by egocentrism. Children believe that their way of thinking is the only way to think.
d. Decentring. A pre-operational child has difficulty in seeing more than one dimension or aspects of situation. It is called decentring.
e. Animism. Children tend to refer to inanimate objects as if they have life-like qualities and are capable of actions.
f. Seriation. They lack the ability of classification or grouping objects into categories.
g. Conservation. It refers to the understanding that certain properties of an object remain the same despite a change in their appearance.

- ✓ Centration
- ✓ Egocentrism
- ✓ Play
- ✓ Symbolic representation
- ✓ Pretend (or symbolic) play
- ✓ Animism
- ✓ Artificialism
- ✓ Irreversibility

3. Concrete Operation (7-11years)

- During this stage, children begin to think logically about concrete events.
- Children begin to understand the concept of conservation; understanding that, although things may change in appearance, certain properties remain the same.
- During this stage, children can mentally reverse things (e.g., picture a ball of plasticine returning to its original shape).
- During this stage, children also become less egocentric and begin to think about how other people might think and feel.
- Children begin using inductive logic, or reasoning from specific information to a general principle

4. Formal Operational Stage (12 years to up)

- Concrete operations are carried out on things whereas formal operations are carried out on ideas. Formal operational thought is entirely freed from physical and perceptual constraints.
- Abstract thought emerges
- Teens begin to think more about moral, philosophical, ethical, social, and political issues that require theoretical and abstract reasoning
- Begin to use deductive logic, or reasoning from a general principle to specific information

1. Question

In the context of language development, which of the following area was underestimated by Piaget?

A. Heredity

B. Social interaction

C. Egocentric speech

D. Active construction by the child

2. Question.
   According to Piaget theory, which one out of the following will not influence one's cognitive development?

A. Language
B. Social experiences
C. Maturation
D. Activity

3. According to Piaget, children's thinking differs in……. From adults than in….. ?

A. Amount and kind
B. Size and correctness
C. Kind and amount
D. Size and type

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